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CHAPTER 11

Discourse Analysis

The Study of Language

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INTRODUCTION

Book, Examples, P142:

- **Newspaper Headline:** Trains Collide, Two Die
- **Notice:** No Shoes, No Service
- **Paragraph:**

My Town

My natal was in a small town, very close to Riyadh capital of Saudi Arabia. The distant between my town and Riyadh 7 miles exactly. The name of this Almasani that means in English Factories. It takes this name from the peopl's carrer. In my childhood I remember that people live. It was very simple. Most the people was farmer.

NOTES

- We are capable of more than simply recognising correct vs. incorrect forms.
 - We cope with fragments in newspapers and notices for example.
- We have the ability to create complex interpretations of fragmentary linguistic messages.
 - We can even cope with texts, written in English, which we couldn't produce ourselves and which appear to break a lot of rules of the English language. We don't reject a text as ungrammatical but rather we try to make sense of it.

- So, how can we do all of that?

What is Discourse Analysis?



Discourse: It is language beyond the sentence.

So,

Discourse analysis: The study of language in text and conversation.

TEXTS

- What helps us make sense of a text is that it must have a certain structure with **cohesion** and **coherence**.
- **Cohesion: The ties and connections that exist within a text.**
 - **Example:** My father once bought a Lincoln convertible. He did it by saving every penny he could. That car would be worth a fortune nowadays. However, he sold it to help pay for my college education. Sometimes I think I'd rather have the convertible.
 - **Cohesive ties:** Maintaining **reference**, connections to **money** and **time**, **connector**.
- **Coherence: The quality of being logical, consistent and forming a unified whole.**
 - **Example:** My father bought a Lincoln convertible. The car driven by the police was red. That colour doesn't suit her. She consists of three letters. However, a letter isn't as fast as a telephone call.

UTTERANCES

- **A speech event:** An activity in which participants interact via language in some conventional way to arrive at some outcome.
 - Speech events can be a debate, interview, discussion or a casual conversation.
 - It is a social situation involving participants who necessarily have a social relationship of some kind, and who may have particular purposes.
- What people say and do differ according to the circumstances.

THE SOCIAL FACTORS

- When we analyse a **speech event**, we take into consideration **social factors**, i.e. the:
 1. **Participants:** The **roles** of the speaker and the listener, their **relationship, age, education**...etc.
 - E.g.: friends, strangers, men, women, young, old, of equal or unequal status
 2. **Setting:** **Where** and **when** are they speaking?
 3. **Topic:** **What** are they talking about?
 4. **Function:** **Why** they are speaking?

SPEECH EVENTS

- ▶ It may include an obvious speech act, such as “I don’t really like this”, as in a speech event of *complaining*.
- ▶ However, it may also include other utterances that may **lead** to a **central action**.
- ▶ For instance, a **‘request’** is **NOT** made by means of a single speech act suddenly uttered. It is **typically** a speech event as seen in the following example:

EXAMPLE



Him: Oh, Mary I'm glad you're here.

Her: What's up?

Him: I can't get my computer to work.

Her: Is it broken?

Him: I don't think so.

Her: What's it doing?

Him: I don't know. I'm useless with computers.

Her: What kind is it?

Him: It's a Mac. Do you use them?

Her: Yeah.

Him: Do you have a minute?

Her: Sure.

Him: Oh, great.

NOTES

- The previous example may be called a ‘*requesting*’ *speech event* without a **central speech act** of *request*.
- There was **no** actual request stated. We can characterize ‘**Do you have a minute?**’ as a **pre-request** so that the hearer has the chance to say no.
 - By saying ‘**sure**’, the hearer is:
 - Acknowledging that she has time.
 - Willing to do the unstated action.

CONVERSATION ANALYSIS

- **A conversation:** An activity in which two or more people take turns at speaking.

- Typically, only **one person** speaks at a time and there tends to be **avoidance of silence** .
 - A: Didn't you [know why-
 - B: [But he must've been there by two
 - A: Yes but you knew where he was going.
 - [= **overlapping**

TURN-TAKING

- Usually, **participants** wait until one **speaker** **indicates** that he or she has **finished**, by signaling a ***completion point***.
- How do speakers mark their turns as **complete**?
 - By asking a question.
 - By pausing at the end of a completed syntactic structure like a phrase or sentence.
 - Eye contact.

TURN-TAKING

- Also, by showing they want to say something, participants can:
 - Start to make **short sounds**, usually repeated, while the speaker is talking
 - **Body shifts**
 - **Facial expressions** to signal that they have something to say

Basically, a conversation looks like this:

“I speak, you speak, I speak , you speak...etc”

TURN-TAKING

- Research has shown different expectations of conversational style and different strategies of participation in conversation.
 - **For example:**
 - **Rudeness** – If one speaker cuts in on another speaker
 - **Shyness** – If one speaker keeps waiting for an opportunity to take a turn and none seems to occur.

TURN-TAKING

- The participants characterized as ‘rude’ or ‘shy’ in this way may simply be adhering to slightly different conventions of **turn-taking**.
 - **‘Long-winded’** speakers or those used to ‘holding the floor’ avoid having normal completion points by:
 - **Avoiding** the use of **pauses** at the **end** of a sentence.
 - Making their sentences **run on** by using connectors such as **and, and then, so, but ...etc.**
 - Placing **pauses** at points where the message is clearly **incomplete**.
 - Preferably filling the pause with hesitation markers such as **er, um, uh, ah**
 - **Avoiding eye contact**

EXAMPLE

A: That's their favourite restaurant because they ... enjoy French food and when they were ... in France they couldn't believe that ... you know the food was... er amazing and they er really really liked it.

B: What was that restaurant?

... = *Pause*

You know, er = *Fillers*

THE COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

- The most noticeable features of conversational discourse is that it is very ‘**co-operative**’.
 - i.e. **Participants are co-operating with each other.**
- Philosopher **Paul Grice** described the **co-operative principle** with its **four maxims**. (Maxims=Rules)
 - *“Make your conversational contribution such as is **required**, at the state at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.”*
(Grice, 1975)

THE GRICEAN MAXIMS

- 1) **Quantity maxim:** Make your contribution as informative as is required, but not more, or less, than is required.
- 2) **Quality maxim:** Say the truth.
- 3) **Relation maxim:** Be relevant.
- 4) **Manner maxim:** Be clear, brief and orderly.

We assume that people are **telling the truth, being relevant, and trying to be as clear as they can.**

EXAMPLE



Daughter: Mum, can I have a tattoo?

Mother: Yeah, right after I have my nose pierced.

□ Which maxim is flouted?

HEDGES

- **Hedges:** Words or phrases used to indicate that we're not really sure that what we are saying is sufficiently correct or complete.
 - They are concerned with the Gricean maxims.
 - They can be referred to as 'cautious notes'.
- We use them to show that we are concerned about following the maxims while being co-operative participants in conversation.

EXAMPLES

1 - Concerning the **Quality** maxim:

- Sort of...kind of...
 - (for accuracy) as in *His hair was kind of long.*
- As far as I know
- correct me if I'm wrong,...
- I'm not absolutely sure, but...
- Possibly...likely... (**not certain**)
- Think or feel (**not know**)
- May or could happen (**not must**)

EXAMPLES

2- Concerning the **Quantity** maxim:

- ▣ As you probably know,...
- ▣ Cut a long story short,...
- ▣ I won't bore you with all the details,...

3- Concerning the **Relation** maxim:

- ▣ Anyway,...
- ▣ Well, anyway...
- ▣ Oh, by the way... (to mention something unconnected)

4- Concerning the **Manner** maxim:

- ▣ I'm not sure if this makes sense, but...

IMPLICATURES

- **Implicature:** An additional conveyed meaning.

Example:

- Carol: Are you coming to the party tonight?
- Lara: I've got an exam tomorrow.

What is meant here?

EXAMPLE

❖ **Example:**

I didn't find my favourite cookies in the nearby *supermarket*.

❖ **Book, example P:150:**

Trying not to be out of the office for long, Suzy went into the nearest place, sat down and ordered an avocado sandwich. It was quite crowded but the service was fast, so she left a good tip. Back in the office, things were not going well.

❖ **Book, example P:151:**

Fill measure cup to line and repeat every 2 to 3 hours.

NOTES

- ❖ We do not need to be told what is normally found in a supermarket.
 - ❖ We know that there is food displayed on shelves arranged in aisles, with shopping carts and checkout counters.
- ❖ This type of **knowledge** is what we call a **schema**.
 - ❖ We usually **'build' interpretations** of what we read by using a lot **more information THAN** is **presented in words** on the page – based on our **expectations of what normally happens**.
 - ❖ Sometimes **crucial information** is **omitted** from important instructions on the assumption that **everybody knows** the scenario.
- ❖ This type of **knowledge** is called a **script**.

SCHEMAS AND SCRIPT

- **Schema:** A conventional knowledge structure that exists in memory
 - E.g. the supermarket experience.
 - *Plural: schemas or schemata.*

- **Script:** A dynamic schema.
 - i.e. instead of the set of the typical fixed features in a schema, a script has a series of conventional actions that take place.
 - E.g. going to the dentist, eating at a restaurant.

- A **script** is essentially a dynamic schema.

Schema: a set of typical fixed features.

- **Script:** a series of conventional actions that take place.

- **Script:** Cough syrup medicine:

- Fill the measure cup to line and repeat every 2 to 3 hours.

Our understanding of what we read is not only based on what we see on the page (*language structures*), but also on other things that we have in mind (*knowledge structures*).